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ABSTRACT

This document consists of five reports on forums held in the spring of 1977 on social and educational problems in New York City. Topics of discussion included: (1) what is right and wrong with our public and private secondary educational system in New York City; (2) fiscal resources and New York City's capacity to provide necessary human services to the poor, minorities, and other citizens of the city; (3) the urban crisis (crime); (4) the public school system and the poor of New York City; and (5) the crisis in education. At each forum a number of panelists, both clergy and lay persons, spoke about their areas of experience in public and parochial education and the social services, particularly among the poor people of the city. Their discussion on crucial social problems and recommendations for ways the government and the schools could address these problems are summarized in the reports. (Author/GC)

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THE URBAN CRISIS FORUM REPORTS

Catholic Interracial Council of New York, Inc.

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1977

FORUM II

ON

EDUCATION

What is right and wrong with our public and private elementary and secondary educational system in New York City?

February 28, 1977

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

AT

LINCOLN CENTER

PANELISTS:

Dr. Robert J. Christen	President, N.Y.C. Board of Education
Rev. Msgr. James A. Feeney	Supt. of Parochial Schools, Archdiocese of New York
Dr. Robert Young	Dean, SEEK, College Discovery, CUNY.
Miss Susan Glass	United Federation of Teachers
Rev. Henry Rucker	Director, Uptown Community. Social And Educational League
Rabbi A. Allen Block	Temple Emanuel of Canarsie

CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL
FORUM ON EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 28, 1977 - - FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

A provocative, frequently contentious Forum on Education was moderated by Alfred Giardino for the C. I. C. on February 28th, 1977 at Fordham University. The six panelists - working professionals in the field - brought anger, passion and sharply conflicting views to their analysis of education in New York City in the troubled 1970's. Moderator Giardino, C. I. C. Board member and former Board Chairman of CUNY, exercised tremendous diplomatic skills mediating between a host of tough-minded professionals through nearly two hours of intense give and take.

The first panelist was Dr. Robert Christen, President of the New York City Board of Education. A New Yorker, Christen was described by Moderator Giardino as a profound student of educational policies and philosophy in the United States, having devoted a major portion of his career to the youth of New York City.

Dr. Christen was indignant and remained indignant throughout his ten minute analysis of an editorial - "What's Wrong with our Educational System" - which appeared in the first edition of News From the Council. Beginning with a reference to a Hudson Institute analysis of the U. S. educational system for the OEO, the editorial mounted a vigorous attack on a process which increasingly "fails to turn out students who have at the very least mastered the three R's"... It concluded:

"To deny so fundamental a perception in a child is to deny his humanity. To deny a child the right to read is to brind him for life, a

ward of the state. When this denial is systematic, and results in the wasting of minds, is this not genocide?

As a professional in the field, Christen said, this type of charge is particularly annoying, a manifestation of a current trend toward extremism in language - a trend, he added, from which the Board of Education itself is not immune.

"We've all been guilty. We should--all of us-- start to moderate our terms. The system we have is not an optimum system - nor will it be. But we can assess our failures without assuming the worst - that all teachers are indifferent and lazy. If we're not capable of coping with all the problems - it's not for want of trying."

Christen found it particularly ironic that Frank Ambruster of the Hudson Institute was quoted as an educational authority. Armbruster and the Institute, he charged, have had several incarnations as "experts" on various aspects of American domestic and foreign policy. In 1964, for example, Armbruster was a prime advocate of expanding the land war in Vietnam up to and including the advocacy of nuclear weapons.

Vietnam, I submit <u>was</u> a genocidal war - incapable of any kind of rational explanation and in 1964 I was against that war. Now apparently I'm a monster on the Board of Education.

Dr. Christen said that a more valid critique of education might involve an approach currently in use by the Educational Testing Service at Princeton which is analyzing the downward trend of SAT scores. The approach is basic, all encompassing:

- It studies the <u>tests</u> themselves.
- It studies the <u>schools</u>.
- It studies the <u>students</u>.
- It studies the <u>society</u>.

Too much current criticism, he argued, is based on idealized, frequently fragmentary memories of the "good old days" in education. Too often we forget that even "yesterday" there were inadequate schools in many parts of the city, even as we recall the glorious days of James Monroe H. S. and Taft in New York City.

We have moved from a situation in which we had relatively small numbers of kids who were seriously disadvantaged to one in which very large numbers are disadvantaged.

He concluded by stating that, after all, the schools deal with our youngsters only six hours out of the twenty-four - that our educational dilemmas are inextricably bound to the dilemmas of the larger society.

The Rev. Monsignor James A. Feeney, Superintendent of Parochial Schools in the Archdiocese of New York City, was the second panelist. Feeney, Chairman of the Committee of Non-Public School Officials in New York, surveyed the nearly convulsive changes in parochial school education which have occurred since the bellweather year of 1963. "In the past fifteen years, he said "some of the greatest changes in the history of the Roman Catholic Church have occurred and, of course, there have been tremendous changes in our schools".

In New York City, some basic statistics tell part of the story. In 1963, for example, there were 220,000 students in parochial schools as compared to the 150,000 youngsters in attendance in 1977. The 1963 cost per pupil was $100,000 per year as against the 1977 cost of approximately $550.00 per year - a cost which now has to be borne by parents.

Feeney joined Dr. Christen in deploring a "rhetoric which sometimes

seems bent on self destruction" and which, mercifully, shows signs of abatement, at least with respect to parochial school education. As referents to the period in question he briefly summarized some of the findings of Father Andrew Greeley in his 1963 and 1976 surveys of Roman Catholic educational systems in the United States. He found most intriguing Greeley's thesis that, in 1976-1977, the Church seems to be in a period of decline but that interest in parochial schools by parents has never been greater.

I suggest that - after a necessary period of intense change and criticism - there are indications of a turnaround, that in fact, we have turned the corner. Interest and willingness have never been greater and I believe that this is true because of vastly improved training of parochial school principals and teachers plus the tremendous involvement of parents. I believe that the future of parochial education looks good.

Susan Glass, Director of Public Relations for the United Federation of Teachers, eschewed a philosophical approach to the Forum topic of what's wrong and right about public and parochial education in New York City. Instead, the columnist and social critic concentrated on the fiscal crisis as it has grievously affected the quality of education in the City. Noting that the Board of Education "took a very disproportionate cut in its budget in 1975 - 1976", Glass pointed out that nearly 20,000 positions were lost. While some people have been recalled since then, the net result has been nearly tragic with class teacher-to-student ratios going way up.

We've lost guidance counselors. Attendance teachers. Psychologists. Social Workers. Teachers. We're talking about a system that is severely undernourished.

Ms. Glass categorically rejected the thesis that the U. F. T. should not

have sought pay raises for its members:

Teachers have families, pay rent, have children to educate - and when was the last time you heard people asking the police or firemen to subsidize their departments? In any case - and I think Dr. Christen would agree - the enormous increase in mandated costs (heat, fuel, maintenance, etc.) are factors which the budget cannot meet.

There is one solution to the current crisis, Glass argued, and that is Washington, D. C. This city has been asked to assume two hugh burdens - welfare costs and Medicare, both of which should be financed by the federal government. Albert Shanker and the UFT are "absolutely convinced that the future of the schools lies in the future of the city - a city which has lost 600,000 jobs in the last decade or so. We need a massive job stimulus program".

Glass vigorously defended seniority as an important criteria in the current mandated lay-off situation. The lay-offs, she said, cut deeply into many license area and, surprising many in the audience, she observed that Italo-Americans were the hardest hit group in terms of positions lost during the present crisis. "Tenure is fair, it enables fairness for individuals as well as groups."

She concluded her brief remarks by asserting that teachers - New York City Teachers - <u>are</u> doing an effective job teaching minority and disadvantaged when class size permits. "We need much lower ratios. Bluntly, we need to bring back every laid off teacher in New York City."

Dr. Robert Young is the Dean of the SEEK Program at the City University of the City of New York, a forceful and long-term advocate of higher education for disadvantaged youngsters. He is also the Director of the College Discovery Program.

Young briskly analyzed the political developments which led to the creation of SEEK and CDP in the mid 1960's. New York City's program is by far the largest with 10,600 students involved in SEEK and 4,500 in CDP. They were created, he reminded the C.I.C. audience, to offer assistance in the following areas:

- Remedial/Compensatory support.
- Counseling support.
- Tutoring
- Financial Aid

These functions developed through the years of experience with the program - which is now in danger of being "audited out of existence." This, in Young's view will be a real tragedy because SEEK has, for all the sniping by politicians, played a truly positive role in the education of disadvantaged students. More than 5,000 students have graduated from college through the program and many have gone on to graduate work.

SEEK and CDP are geared to repair a situation after "years of deficit, working with youngsters who enter college lacking the most basic skills and fraught with individual problems."

Now, the state seems to be pulling back. Serious inroads have been made into the budget. Services are being cut back; numbers are being reduced. The future is problematic in the extreme:

I would like to think that eventually there will be no need for a SEEK program. But that time has not come and will not come until public schools improve. To educate a SEEK youngster costs the State approximately $3,200 per year. When you think of a society which requires $30,000 per year to support a man in prison, that is a very small price to pay indeed.

The Reverend Dr. Henry Rucker, Founder of the Solid Rock Baptist

Church, is a man possessed of a powerful anger:

"After I was invited to this meeting, I was angry for accepting. I felt then - and feel now - that it should not be held, that it is another part of the most hypocritical society I have heard about or read about. I am an American; an independent, mature American, and it is my firm opinion that the perpetrators of the educational system in New York City are special criminals."

The central thesis of Dr. Rucker's remarks was a very simple one - racism is rampant in a school system in which 85% of the pupils are black, Puerto Rican or poor. Educational policy in a nutshell is designed to keep black people and poor people in their so-called place. The Board turns out countless youngsters who cannot read or write and is a detriment to the economic progress of the blacks and the poor in New York City.

A new day is coming, Rucker told the audience, a day when "we are going to take care of ourselves and we are not going to listen to you anymore. The new system will produce youngsters who are mighty and creative and productive. I am here to tell you my friends that it is not too late to build a new world. A world of dignity, where character is the name of the game."

The last panelist was Rabbi Allen Block of Temple Emanuel of Canarsie, a sociologist and educator with a long-term interest in retarded children and adults. Rabbi Block provided C.I.C. members with a moving narrative of the educational aspirations of the Jewish immigrants to New York City - a process through which the "greenhorners" became Americanized. The key elements in the magnificent success story were, of course, the parents of the youngsters who made mighty sacrifices in the name of the education of their children.

That spirit, the Rabbi suggested, is missing today with too many parents having a poor attitude. This has been reflected in a perceived decline in the capacity of public schools to provide youngsters with good training and develop strong, moral, able leaders. The decline has prompted renewed attention and appreciation of the private parochial school in this city. "We need schools that teach children how to read, write and count - of whatever variety."

"The school should enhance life. While we all share a commitment to a strong public school system we cannot also deny a role to parochial and day schools. They have proved to be a plus for humanity and they need federal support. They are part of a process which truly speaks to the greatness of man - to our common, priceless humanity."

For the next half hour, the panelists were besieged with statements and questions from a thoroughly aroused audience. The chief theme of many questions concerned the whole issue of teacher (and student) accountability to which all of the panelists contributed often opposing views.

It was an angry Forum - our Forum on Education. The complex and often tragic educational system in our city prompts no easy solutions, no panaceas. The will to solve those problems, as manifested in the forum proceedings, is strong, however, and they will be solved by some of the diverse and passionate voices who gave of their time on February 28th. The Forum series is rapidly becoming a place to hear the true voices and concern of our city. Join us.....Get involved.

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CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL

FORUM III

THE URBAN CRISIS

IMPACT ON HUMAN SERVICES

(Fiscal resources and New York City's capacity to provide necessary human services to the poor, minorities and other citizens of the city.)

April, 1977

THE URBAN CRISIS

A CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL FORUM

THE IMPACT ON HUMAN SERVICES

The CIC held its third Forum on the urban crisis on April 26 at the Wilkie Memorial Building in midtown Manhattan. The discussion brought together three distinguished panelists to analyze the city's fiscal nightmare as it has affected its ability to provide essential human services to the poor, minorities, the ill and elderly and other New Yorkers. Moderated by John Donahue, a finance analyst for the New York City Council, who is also a member of the CIC Advisory Board, the panel included:

Ms. Gladys Harrington - Deputy Commissioner of the NYC Dept. of Social Services

Sister Una McCormack - Executive Director, Catholic Home Bureau - New York

Father John Cleary - Associate Director for Planning, Catholic Charities - Bklyn.

Moderator Donahue began the discussion with a very brief overview of the city's fiscal dilemma in a time he described as being in both economic and moral crisis. He reminded the panel and the small audience that we are scarcely at the halfway mark of the city's three year economic plan and that we have already seen a "significant loss of dollars which has, in turn, generated a loss of Federal dollars in the range of 400 million." He introduced the first panelist, Ms. Gladys Harrington, by asking this career city official what the budget cuts have meant to the city in both the immediate and long-term sense.

Gladys Harrington

Ms. Harrington painted a somber portrait of an agency, the Department of Social Services, in deep crisis, forced to operate with cuts which have significantly affected the Department in the provision of a host of services. Pointing to a reduction in the Senior Citizens program of 7.4 million dollars (down from 21.0 to 13.6), Ms. Harrington indicated that the very modest goal of the agency was "to continue to deliver services at a reasonable level." In this area alone, she said, even with the help of many volunteers, elderly New Yorkers have paid a painful price in a period of fiscal retrenchment. She then took the Forum audience on a quick Cook's tour of conditions in the other DOSS components:

Shelter Services: The Men's Shelter on East Third Street has been confronted with money and staff cuts at precisely the moment when more, not fewer, services are required. The population of the 24 hour per day institution has radically changed from a basically old, white and drop-out resident body to a much younger and much more seriously deprived group -- many of them black and Hispanic. "This group is a lot harder to work with in the main -- many are recent discharges from mental institutions and have no other place to go -- and it brings us up to a very basic question: How do you get money to help rehabilitate social outcasts in this society?" The situation in the 47-bed Women's Shelter is equally depressing.

Division of Volunteer Proprietaries: This once crack unit has fallen on drastic times with a 71% cutback in its budget. Intended to service the disabled, elderly or blind in placement in decent rehabilitative centers, the unit currently cannot provide protective services to the more than 20,000 New Yorkers who utilize them.

She concluded:

The diminuation in dollars has produced a definite diminuation in services. Funding from Washington and Albany (Home Care, Medicaid, Title XX, etc.) also has its own built-in Catch 22. Often based on population figures, it fails to take into account the fact that the general population might decline but the target population continues to grow. Agencies are at each other's throats, scrounging for money and everyone suffers. In the meantime, all we can do is work harder, reach out better and stretch the services as much as we can.

Sister Una McCormack

I've been working in the child care field for 27 years and I've watched the problem get worse. I'm going to start by saying that it bothers me tremendously that we put 200 million dollars in a foster care system and not a dollar into keeping children in their own community and families. In less than 15 years, the population of children known to require this care has grown from 18,000 to 28,000. Because only the poor become statistics in this country, we all assume that these are all poor children -- they are not, and child abuse is a national epidemic.

In a free-wheeling, frequently angry discourse, Sister McCormack proceeded to lambaste "a system in which hundreds of children roam the streets and 70,000 do not ever attend school. It is a society which creates 42nd Street. It is a society with seven-year-old prostitutes. It is a society in which brutalized children become tyrants, running wild.

Go back to the history of immigration and a child care system which tried to take drunken children off the streets. A hundred, fifty years later, and we're all so much smarter. We all have our MSW's, right? And here we are

with the children in Times Square and 28,000 others in the foster care system.

McCormack scored a toothless National Center of Child Abuse, welfare myths and a society in which corporate rip-offs have brought us to a point where it is not idle to ask:

"How can poor people live in this city?"

Father John Cleary

Father Cleary closely analyzed the health care system in New York beginning with a very basic criticism of a health care system based on a curative model (health care to make the sick better) as opposed to the more positive model which is calculated to keep people from getting sick in the first place.

We have a health care system in which the largest amount of money, facilities and personnel are focussed on people who are almost dead. We are extremists in everything in this society and everything is in this corner. The solution, of course, is an affirmative health care model but there's nothing in that corner. People cannot get care if they're <u>almost</u> in bad shape.

Cleary described a world of health care which has changed enormously since 1966 with the advent of Medicare and Medicaid. Today, 89% of our doctors are in specialty practices and the GP (who is usually older) is in a considerable minority. In New York City, some basic statistics illustrate an extraordinarily troubling situation. For example, 8.3% of the GNP is spent nationally on health care.

In New York City, using the same ratio, 33% of the GNP is spent. Yet the basic indices of health in New York City are on the negative side.

Costs have also risen astronomically from 2.5 billion dollars in 1965 to 6.7 billion in 1975. In that time the public expenditure has risen to 60% with the remainder -- in the main -- coming from semi-public sources.

It is generally agreed that there are too many hospitals in this city and too many hospital beds. Accepted, however, there remains the problem of which hospitals and which beds to close. Further, in this process, there remains the obvious felt superiority of the tertiary routine hospital and secondary health care facilities.

The obvious temptation is to close the rinky dink numbers. They're rundown; they're located in bad news neighborhoods. If you follow the curative model, that argument is right. But look at the smaller places more positively. They are there where they are needed and they are providing good medicine to the people who need it most. There is tremendous redundancy of service in the elite, tertiary care hospitals and the cost factor is huge. It should also be remembered that, for all the fact that the municipal system is in tremendous disarray, it is the system that serves the poor.

Upon describing the current operation as "systemic chaos," Cleary concluded his remarks with an account of a problem faced by the Department of Health in 1976:

Seven or eight months ago -- just a couple of blocks from the largest medical complex in the world -- the Department of Health had to choose between providing free

dental care or immunization services to youngsters in New York City. The choice was between, on the one hand, a generation of kids with bad teeth or, on the other, the danger of brain damage and other problems from a non-immunization policy. Talk about choices. It's like the death knell of improved hospital services in New York City. We have to change our priorities. We have to adopt the preventive health care model.

Conclusion

The small audience joined the panel in a dialogue that, for the most part, amplified on the generally bleak picture for human services in New York painted during the discussion. Gradually, a consensus opinion evolved (which held, in brief, that moral indignation, while important in itself, is only the first required step in beginning to achieve political support for the human services this city needs to survive.

An obvious point, perhaps, but one worth making as never before. With this Forum as with all others, the CIC seeks to arouse your concern about these issues. Come to the Forums. Bring friends. We need your support in the struggle for racial, social and economic justice.

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CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL

REPORT

THE URBAN CRISIS

CRIME

May, 1977

CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL

FORUM REPORT

CRIME

"Crime-everybody talks about it but its more than a legal problem for both the victim and the criminal".

With those words, Father Kenneth Jadoff, host of the "Contemporary Catholic" television show introduced a trio of CIC sponsored experts on the subject of crime in New York City, Mr. Andrew Casazza, Executive Director of the town of Huntington's Youth Bureau, Peter L. Berger, of the Graduate Faculty of Rutgers University and CIC Board Member John P. Hale who is a board member of several private organizations devoted to youth welfare. The following edited transcript of the show is presented by the CIC as another in its series of Forums on the urban crisis.

Father Jadoff

Mr. Hale, what is wrong with the juvenile justice system in New York City?

Mr. Hale

We have a criminal court system here which has almost ceased to function. If you test the objectives of criminal courts they are to determine who is innocent and who is guilty....Our court simply doesn't do that anymore. I think we can establish, in fact, that a large number of people who are guilty are set free and go out and prey against the poor people of this city...Unfortunately, a good many of the rules that have been set up over the years to protect the poor of the city are the very rules which criminals use to make life almost a jungle in some parts of the city.....

Father Jadoff

So you place the blame squarely on the courts?

Mr. Hale

If you look at the over-all picture, our police certainly arrest a large number of people——100,000 felony arrests last year in Manhattan alone. The problems is that the courts do not process those arrests...and insist on confinement for those persons who commit very serious crimes.

Father Jadoff

Mr. Berger, do you agree?

Professor Berger

I have a different angle....its much more important to look at the community in which crimes are committed. We should ask two questions: What kind of environment exists which encourages crime and how can such an environment be changed? The project I'm working with in New York tries to deal with that aspect of it, trying to deal with the community itself, what its strengths are, and what the courts and the police can do to help.

Mr. Casazza

I agree with Mr. Hale. The courts in New York State (and nationally) are overloaded. However, with Mr. Berger, I think we have to go beyond what is wrong with the criminal justice system and look at something much more important——how do we prevent crime? What can we do to strengthen our communities?

Mr. Hale

The poor are the overwhelming victims of violent crime. You have a number of factors at work. You don't need a very large number of criminals if they are able to commit successive crimes without being taken off the streets. The majority of the poor are by no means criminals. It just means that in those areas these criminals are able to commit successive crimes.

Prefessor Berger

If I may, I'd like to return to the project I was discussing before. Its called the Mediating Structures Project and what we mean by mediating structures are institutions which are indigenous

to the community in which they spend their lives. We look at the family, neighborhoods ethnic or racial subculture. We are looking at a remarkable project in West Philadelphia which, comprised of lay persons, has had real success in working with juvenile gangs. They've achieved remarkable, measurable results in reducing street crime. The basic idea here is a different approach.

Father Jadoff

How do you see the family role in this?

Mr. Casazza

I'd like to take a piece of that. One of the things we've done is come to a point in our very sophisticated society in which we over-professionalize just about every field of endeavor——including my own field of social work.....The local community, family, individual has been put at arm's length by the professionals. This has created a "it's not my job" mentality. What I think Dr. Berger is excited about is the return of the neighborhood concept, something people could identify with....There have to be new forms in law enforcement which people, families, can relate to. The individual must become part of the community. I think that law enforcement, the criminal justice system, is falling apart because we have removed ourselves from the system. We're trying to get the community involved in Nassau County and for the first time we're seeing a reduction in juvenile delinquency in our community. People are taking part.

Professor Berger

Let me ask something. We're all professionals and presumably good ones.....If you had a community and you had a choice of 100 "experts" like ourselves or 100 really committed mothers who know their kids and know their community who would you put your money on for effective crime prevention?

Mr. Hale

If you're talking about the South Bronx, I'd put my money on the police. We were talking about the family. I'd like to focus on a mythical family, black, father, mother, two children—— a coherent family living in the South Bronx....I don't see how that father can hope to raise a decent family with all the pressures in that community. He lives in a lawless community. Dr. Berger's approach is very Attractive but I think that for "my" family in the South Bronx change is needed now. It is government's obligation to

restore the basic fabric of life in the Bronx——not the mothers.

Professor Berger

We don't really disagree. But I think that there is a little disagreement, though, because as you yourself said, most people who are poor do not commit crimes. Even in the South Bronx, most families function pretty well in preventing crime. Why can't we have public policies that try to work with families directly? I also have a little trouble with your theory of disorganization. I don't know how disorganized these communities are. If we can take the organization which is there and try to turn the community around... I think that might be a fruitful policy to follow....

Mr. Hale

In some sections of this city the social fabric is almost completely disintegrated.....

Mr. Casazza

Who can disagree? You can't disagree. But there are very real strengths in the South Bronx and that is the extended family. I don't believe that there has been a program set up to work with that strength. We've put millions of dollars into law enforcement and nothing in to that....We haven't approached that yet....

Father Jadoff

Specifically, what kind of approach to teaching the family in the community are we talking about?

Mr. Casazza

It would be my hope that government funding can begin to look to communities to come up with some creative ideas....

Father Jadoff

Are you saying that we have to rebuild and restructure the family before we can prevent crime?

Mr. Hale

No.....I'd like to try this on you. I think that the government currently acts as a teacher, but it teaches the exact opposite

of what it should be teaching. Many of these children from disorganized families are brought into contact with a penal law that states Thou Shalt Not Steal. The child steals; he finds that there is a sanction in the law....and he is brought into court and finds that nothing happens. Now he finds that society's standards for conduct are not enforced. He learns that society's standards are meaningless.

Father Jadoff

It seems to me that if you have strong family unit, a kid wouldn't be involved in crime to begin with.

Professor Berger

I would like to turn things around. The basic solution will not come from the police and the courts. There have to be other institutions.....There is also a slight contradiction in what you (addressing Mr. Hale) said. I would say if you compare those two institutions, the family on the one hand and law enforcement on the other, I would say the family works much better....why not concentrate on the institution that works fairly well?

Mr. Casazza

Do you think we will ever get the kind of law enforcement system we need in New York?

Mr. Hale

We're human beings; we're not dealing with perfection. But I think we see that the system can be made much better.

Mr. Casazza

There are many more important influences on the community than the law enforcement system. The community can be very effective putting sanctions on behavior.....

Professor Berger

We haven't mentioned the church in all of this. We used the phrase "Value system" and religion is very strategic to that. In many programs, the church was completely ignored....

Mr. Hale

Well, can government in a pluralistic society teach values?

I don't think it can. Its frozen, neutral.

Professor Berger

But values can be nourished by government.

Mr. Hale

I agree. I had the pleasure of having dinner with U Thant and we got on the subject of values. He could not comprehend the fact that in this country we do not see the need to nourish a value system. I think he's right. We have to find a way for government to nourish values if we are going to have a reasonable, safe, orderly society.....

Father Jadoff

Time has run out on a very stimulating discussion. Thanks once again to Mr. Mario Cuomo, President of the Catholic Interracial Council and John Garra, Its Exective Director. I'm Father Kenneth Jadoff reminding you once again that even the little guy has a right to live.

(Additional Copies of this Forum report may be obtained from the CIC, 225 East 52nd Street, New York, N. Y. (212) 751-9445)

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CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL REPORT

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE POOR OF NEW YORK CITY

Panelists:

Dr. Bernard R. Gifford

Mr. David S. Seeley

Mr. John P. Hale

June 1977

THE SCHOOLS IN CRISIS

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE POOR OF NEW YORK CITY

A CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL REPORT

The following is an analysis of problems in public education in New York City in which the CIC brought together three highly knowledgeable professionals and asked some hard questions. In a remarkably trenchant discussion, Dr. Bernard R. Gifford, former Deputy Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education, David S. Seeley, Director of the Public Education Association and Mr. John P. Hale representing the Council, focussed on the public schools as they attempt to service the poor in New York City, particularly black and Puerto Rican youngsters.

This edited transcript has been prepared at the request of members and friends who were unable to attend the discussion. We believe that it represents a significant addition to the continuing dialogue aimed at improving a public school system -- once the envy of the world -- in the vise of a pervasive and growing distress.

The moderator of the program was Father Kenneth Jadoff, host of the "Contemporary Catholic" television series, who began the discussion by asking the panelists what they see, "specifically, as the major problems in education in the public school system of New York City?"

John P. Hale

We should focus on the public schools as they attempt to service the children in the ghetto areas. It is generally concluded that they are not performing their job well at all. If the primary objective is to teach children to read and write, all of the measures seem to show they are falling far short of meeting that objective acceptably -- especially in the ghetto areas. If we're going to focus on the problems, let's focus on where they appear to be most acute, and that is the servicing of the black child and the Puerto Rican child in the disrupted sections of the city -- the South Bronx, Bedford-Stuy -- and test out the performance of the public school system as we see it there. I think the performance is of a low level. I think we should see if we could find out why and if there are things that might be done to turn it around.

Bernard R. Gifford

I agree with Mr. Hale; I think the problem that the school system must address itself to, more than any other problem, of course, is the education of those pupils that now constitute 70% of our school system, the blacks and Hispanics who, because of reasons that are known to everyone, tend to be poorer than white students. But I would like also to make another point.

We have always had a problem in this town of educating poor people. It would be a mistake to say that 15 years ago, or 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, when the school system was predominantly white, they were successful in educating all poor children. The problem is exacerbated today because of economic conditions that didn't exist at that time. Thirty years ago, New York City employed over 700,000 workers in the manufacturing and garment trades and pupils that came out of the school system thirty and forty years ago were at least able to find jobs in the semi-skilled sector. The city has lost over 400,000 jobs in those areas, so those days are over.

We are now faced with a situation where our inability to educate children, especially poor children, is compounded by the fact that there are no economic opportunities for those pupils once they leave the public schools, and so the pressure on the school system is far greater today than it was twenty or thirty years ago, when the economy of the city was able to absorb people that don't perform as well as we would like them to have done in the schools. The linkage between education and economic development and economic well-being wasn't as well formed 30 years ago as it is today.

David S. Seeley

I agree. I think just on that point you can say that at the turn of the century only 7% of your high-school age kids were in high school. The other 93% of the kids were not labeled "drop-outs." There were avenues for growth and development and maturing into adulthood that simply do not exist today, so education is enormously more needed than it ever was before.

The only other amendment I would make to the original statement of Mr. Hale's is that it isn't only, not just black and Puerto Rican kids, as Mr. Gifford says, it's poor kids; and then, secondly, that indeed there are schools in the ghetto that do a good job, and I think it's a terribly important thing to realize. It isn't just that the school system cannot educate poor kids. It can educate poor kids. But it doesn't do so, and you can tell that it can, because there are exceptions.

There are cases where poor kids are learning to read; there is no real reason why virtually every child, unless they are severely handicapped, cannot learn to read, for instance, and get the basic elements of an education and the tools they need by the time they're 19 years old -- they ought to have that -- and we just don't give that to them, in the tens of thousands.

Dr. Gifford

It's also relevant to point out that the economy requires more credentials today than it did before. We have moved toward a "credential" society and we are constantly looking for ways of screening people out. We tend to be increasing entry level credentials that are required for entry into jobs and quite often there is no relationship between the credentials required and the person's capacity to perform the particular job.

Moderator

So you say, a personnel manager in a large corporation, when he gets a resume across his desk, perhaps would disqualify those people who don't have a college degree, without even reading them.

Dr. Gifford

It isn't just the economy. I may have put you in the wrong direction by just hitting that, because to be

a citizen today and to fill out your income tax, to be able to vote intelligently, you have got to have a level of education that you simply didn't have to have 30 and 40 years ago. In terms of this discussion, incidentally, I'm going to skip the general category of the "poor" and focus on our children in our schools in New York City. Unless the system is successful in educating the 70% of the pupil body that are black and Hispanic, our failures will become the adults of tomorrow. More than 60% of all the people under the age of 14 years in New York are black or Hispanic, so we're talking about the future and if we can't educate these people today, then we have no future as a city. I don't want to minimize that problem.

Mr. Hale

...What we've been saying is that 50 years ago one of the reasons why the problems were not so acute in our public school system was that the child of 14 who had no interest in schooling, who really had no native talent for education beyond the stage that he had achieved, would drop out and go to work and therefore the school did not have to deal with that child, who might have been extremely disruptive and impaired the functioning of the classroom for the others who were remaining to progress in their work.

Dr. Gifford

Yes, yes. Another way of saying it is that the public schools 30 or 40 years ago were far more elitist institutions than they are today.

Mr. Seeley

I think the check we have now, the question of native ability, is a very big one, because if we make that assumption, that X number of kids don't have the native ability to achieve, let's say, a high school education, then we're in permanent trouble.

Our organization, the Public Education Association, focusses just on New York City, but it's terribly important to recognize that the problems we have in New York are really almost identical to those in Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles -- this is an urban problem. It isn't because there are some bad people in New York City that got hold of the Board of Ed and are running it downhill, or something. This is a problem that faces every city in the country.

Mr. Hale

Well, I accept that. I accept that. My concern only is that if we start looking at the national picture, our discussion becomes so confused...

Mr. Seeley

But I think one factor you have in all these cities that is really crippling the effort to educate kids is the phenomenon of bureaucracy. I think one of the things we have learned in the last couple of decades is that some functions simply do not get done well by massive government bureaucracies, and that's what you have here in New York City and in Los Angeles and Chicago.

We have this huge government bureaucracy and we say educate our children, and I think you're beginning to learn, we're all beginning to learn, that it just doesn't work that way. You get layers and layers and layers of very well-meaning bureaucrats, and finally you get down to the payoff, which is that the poor teacher, the bottom of this stack, gets very little support, very little ability to operate, often incompetent administration above (not the Deputy Chancellor's Office, I'm happy to say). But there are many people who just can't function to make a huge machine like that work, and that happens in all your big cities, and I think we're going to have to find a way within which you get down to that classroom level, and the school level, where the heart of running a good school can be found. If you get a good principal in a school, and give that person support, you get good education.

That's why you have exceptions even in our ghettoes in New York City and Chicago. You get a strong principal, who is tremendously committed to achieving something and begins to build the morale of the teachers and parents and works as a team enterprise, you can begin to get results.

Mr. Hale

That strong principal works with the same burdensome bureaucracy, and yet you see good results with the bureaucracy there, and poor results elsewhere...

Mr. Seeley

Your good principal finds a way to get away from that bureaucracy, carve out for the school a little enclave.

The good ones, say, go away away and let me run my school. You can intimidate a bureaucracy if you're doing a good job. Some of those principals have been able to work with their chapter chairmen and staff and they work out their own rules, and they work out their own arrangements of trust and confidence with the parent community and, they get the school going.

When you find a principal who has been exercising that leadership, then you know that principal has found a way to keep the bureaucracy at bay so the school can do its job.

Dr. Gifford

I agree with Dave that the problem of school governance is an important one. Actual service delivery is affected by the kind of structure you have organized to deliver those services. That's only one of the problems.

I think that, as we have learned in the past 10 or 15 years or so, that tinkering with school governance isn't going to solve the basic educational problems that we face in New York City or other cities. We have seen a modified form of decentralization at work in New York City...

Mr. Seeley

Watered down...

Dr. Gifford

All right, watered down; I think the expectations and what has actually been realized are far apart. We do need better governance; I would agree with Dave on that, and one would hope that over the next year or so, people at the Board of Education and also out in the community would sit back and say, gee, we've had decentralization for seven years, are we satisfied?

Mr. Seeley

We haven't had it; you've had a muddled system.

Dr. Gifford

Dave, we have had a system; whether it's a muddled system or not, it ought to be looked at.

Should it be strengthened? Should we have more decentralization, should we have recentralization? The point is, I don't know the answers. But I do know the question and the question that we must address ourselves to is this: is the current system of school governance the best system to support the teacher in the classroom? I don't think it is.

Mr. Seeley

I didn't ask about the governance -- I'm talking about the school level...

Dr. Gifford

...But just let me go one step beyond that. Beyond the question of governance, we must also look at the question of social policy. We have an enormous number of organizations in New York City, in both the public and private sector, that impact on young people. And yet we have no youth policy in the City. And in fact, we have no youth policy in this country. When I talk about a cooperative education program, that's really only part of a youth policy.

Each year, in New York City, we hand out some 60,000 jobs to young people, largely poor people, for summer employment. There is no attempt to integrate the summer work experiences with school experiences. I mean, I find that outrageous. When you talk about the failure of the schools, it's very important that we start looking at them as one social institution that interacts with a galaxy of social institutions that are funded on public money.

So we've got to stop holding only the school system accountable, but we've got to start holding all those social institutions that impact upon young people accountable, for a single set of standards, for goals that are well understood and well articulated.

Mr. Hale

Let me sound a note of total dismay. If I understand Mr. Seeley, he was objecting to the fact that the bureaucracy is cumbersome, and that it may be a factor in having as a net result low quality of education. On the other hand, I heard you, Doctor, talking about a tremendous expansion of the bureaucracy, enlarging it and incorporating

youth services facilities, the entire welfare apparatus, and I'm totally stunned. I would expect that the educational apparatus would have most of the answers -- you've been in business for a long time.

Let me try a different direction, another explanation for poor performance in the ghetto schools, the problem of the disruptive pupil and the seeming inability of the educator to separate that disruptive pupil from the school for the benefit of the majority of children. Do you encounter such a problem, Doctor? Is there a child that is clearly disruptive, should not be in the classroom, and you can't get him out? And what is the impact on the school and the performance of the weak teacher?

Dr. Gifford

I am at a considerable disadvantage because we want instant answers, and I seem to be constitutionally unable to generate instant answers. Yes, the disruptive child obviously has an adverse impact on learning in the classroom. If we were to rid the classroom, all the classrooms in New York City, of every disruptive pupil, I think we would still be faced with the problem of massive reading retardation; we would still be faced with the problem of having large numbers of black and Hispanic kids reading well below grade level and performing basic arithmetic computations well below national standards. I've just got to get away from these panaceas -- it isn't school governance, it isn't just the disruptive child; when I talk about institutions that impact on young people, and those institutions working with each other, I'm not saying that we ought to build another bureaucracy; the bureaucracies are there.

What I am simply saying is that those people had better start talking to each other. I have been working in the school system now for three and a half years, and I have never, except when I've gone out of my way, talked to the people involved in the youth employment programs. I had to seek them out; they did not seek me out. I have never sat down and talked with people who run the youth programs in the welfare department, despite the fact that more than 40% of our children are on welfare. What I am simply saying is that billions of dollars are being spent on youth service programs, and somehow we've got to make sure that those monies are spent in ways that help the kids learn and help them to break the cycle of poverty.

Mr. Seeley

There must be some way of coordinating not only the public agencies, but the hundreds, in this City, the hundreds of private recreational and cultural and community organizations that can help youngsters in their growth and development. It's incredible how badly they work together in many parts of the City, and yet, if you go into some parts of the City, you find tremendously creative jobs have been done of getting these people working together, and it makes a terrific difference. We say, why can't we have more of that, why can't we have a better mixture of some of the public agencies and some of the private agencies? After all, the kid doesn't come chopped up as public and private; he has recreational needs, he has educational needs, he has cultural needs. There's a wealth of institutions in this City, both public and private, and tremendous resources both material and human, and we've got to find some way to get the adults working together so that the kids can benefit from all that talent.

Moderator

Well, let me just interject a note of individuality here -- we've been talking about systems and children almost as if they were products. What about the individual family or the individual child? Why do we have to depend on a system for youth placement or a system of youth employment? Can't a child who is educated in the New York City private or public school system go out and find a job, or find summer employment that will be in keeping with his own talents and interests?

Mr. Seeley

People need help, there is no question about that. I think the trick is, can the help be provided without setting up massive government bureaucracies? Even in the middle-class family, we sometimes don't know quite where to turn or where to go if a kid needs a summer job, and how to make that fit with an educational program. Let's assume we could find the kid a summer job; but, as Dr. Gifford says, it may have absolutely no relevance to what the youngster is trying to study or a career that he or she may want to look into later. I think you need networks of counselling and brokering services that can be provided both in public and private agencies, and some system of referral that people can go to for help.

Mr. Hale

Well, let me file a dissent there, too, and I speak from almost 20 years of involvement in youth affairs, never as a full-time professional. The more I see of government attempting to come in with new structures

to solve the problems that they identify, the less effective the entire system seems to be. And I'd be very discouraged if we now say that the reason we can't focus on possible improvements in the educational apparatus is that all of the problems are created outside of us, and they're not within our control, and we have to set something up to control them.

Dr. Gifford

I must emphasize that, in fact, I would make a case that there are many things we're doing in the public sector that ought not to be done in the public sector. If private organizations are better able to provide, let us say, juvenile delinquency prevention programs, to have counseling programs, or special remedial educational services that can do it more efficiently and effectively than we can do it in the public sector, then a comprehensive youth policy would say that the monies ought to go in that direction.

When we talked about the need for a youth policy, it does not follow that what we are saying is that we ought to build a bigger and larger bureaucratic colossus. No, if anything, we're talking about cutting that octopus down to size.

Moderator

I think we have to cut the octopus for the clock. Our time has run out. This has been a very stimulating conversation, it can go on and on and perhaps it should; we only got to the first question we had prepared...

Our guests today on "Contemporary Catholic" have been Dr. David S. Seeley, the Director of the Public Education Association; Dr. Bernard R. Gifford, the Deputy Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education; Mr. John P. Hale, representing the Catholic Interracial Council. Our special thanks, as well, to the Council's President, Mr. Mario Cuomo.

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CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL

FORUM REPORT

THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION

JUNE, 1977

CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL

FORUM REPORT

THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION

"Education is everybody's business——and perhaps that's half the problem".

The speaker was Father Kenneth Jadoff, host of the "Contemporary Catholic" television show as he introduced a panel discussion on public and private education sponsored by the CIC. The distinguished panelists included:

-David S. Seely, Director of the Public Education Association.

-Stephen R. Aiello, Vice-President of the New York City Board of Education.

-John P. Hale, CIC Board Member.

The discussion, taped in late April, followed a CIC colloquy the subject which included Messrs. Seely and Hale and Dr. Bernard R. Gifford which is also available in edited trancript form.

Father Jadoff

To Start off, what's wrong with education in the city of New York today?

John P. Hale

I think that the hallmark is the low level of performance. Within the City system there are, of course, schools with superior performance. But in poor neighborhoods the quality is very low and unacceptable for parents, teachers and the children.

Stephen R. Aiello

I don't know if we can make those kinds of sweeping genaralizations.....

Mr. Hale

If you were going to take one single factor it would be the educational apparatus attempting to do more than it has the competence to do. In some cases it takes a educational, custodial and even a treatment function. The Board hasn't the resources to carry out these functions. In attempting to do so, they've failed to carry out the primary task of providing a good basic education.

Mr. Aiello

I think we're on the same track to a large extent. One of the major problems is the thought that the schools can do everything that society wants them to do. They can't. Somehow, back in the late '30s and '40s educators bought the progressive education notion. To me, the primary function is the mastery of basic skills and competencies. We do an injustice when we permit the public to think that the schools can do more than that.

Mr. Hale

Let me say something. There's no doubt that the schools have a responsitility for health care. Its acceptable and really mandatory. But one would never conceive of a school setting up an in-treatment center in the school. I recently listened to the Chancellor propose additional psychiatrists and psychologists for the schools. That I think, is a DOSS or Department of Health function—not the schools. The concern for children is commendable but the idea is absurd. There has to be a way of separating the disruptive child from the schools.

Mr. Seely

Steve knows I hardly ever come to testify to the defense of our school authorities but when the Chancellor speaks of adding psychiatrists to the schools what that really speaks to is what you said at the beginning of the discussion. What's happened is that society has thrust all of the the responsiblilities onto the schools. They're saying, we don't want to raise our children, we'll turn them over to you. The problem is that we have not made education into everyone's business. We've really gotten away from that.

Father Jadoff

We would agree, then, that the disruptive child is the primary problem?

Mr. Aiello

I don't know if its the primary problem. The polls show that, for parents, discipline is the major problem that has to be dealt with. One of the major problems of urban education is the seeming loss in confidence by the public in the public schools. Some of this concern is realistic, but a lot of it doesn't take into account the positive things we can say about the schools...I concern myself with detractors who know very little about the schools themselves. If we are really to survive economically and socially as a well-integrated city, them we have to maintain a tax base comprised of people who believe in our system.

Mr. Seely

Now, I'll follow my more normal role of criticizing the schools. I believe that the schools can deal much more successfully with discipline problems than they are now, starting with the earliest grades. We are not building in the early grades the idea of the school as a place to learn. Rather, the kids are just fooling around and I think that's a serious problem.

Mr. Hale

There's no doubt that there is tremendous public support for public education. There's no substitute. But how do we move from the support of education to the problems of the disruptive child and one step further, how do we give to educators the tools they need to deal with the disruptive child? More practical weapons?

Father Jadoff

We also have a problem with parents who, to my way of thinking, are marshmallows.

Mr. Aiello

I couldn't agree more. The question is, what do you do when parents throw up their hands? How do you reinforce the kind of things children need in the early grades? Children want authority, discipline and standards. If they're not getting them outside the

school, how can we expect them to get them in the five or six hours they spend in classrooms?

There followed a brief exchange by the three panelists on the efficacy (and the actual number) of suspensions as a way of dealing with disruptive children. In 1976, asserted Mr. Aiello, 27,000 youngsters were suspended from New York City schools, a figure which was disputed by Mr. Hale. The discussion resumed:

Mr. Hale

How long is a child out of school on the basis of a suspension?

Mr. Aiello

It depends. A Superintendent can suspend indefintely as long as there is provided an alternative mode of education....I think everything has to be done before you suspend a youngster. Suspension must be used when everything else doesn't work. The problem is, in a budget squeeze, finding those alternate ways to educate the suspended youngster.

Mr. Hale

Should that really be your problem?

Mr. Seely

Well, it's your problem before the kid is thrown out. A lot of these cases aren't so simple. Sure, there are kids bent on destruction, but a lot of times a kid who is disruptive in one class can be quite cooperative in the next. Also, it would have been a good idea to get to that kid in the third grade....This whole program has been about discipline; I hope we can talk a little bit about education....Whatever the system——suspensions, alternates, family court——the fact is that we're getting lots of 14 and 15 year olds kids who can't read or write....Its a wonder to me that more of them aren't disruptive....

Mr. Hale

When you talk about these 14 and 15 year olds, you are

condemning a large number of our teachers.....

Mr. Seely

Not necessarily. The teachers can be as little to blame as the students. Some teachers can teach very well in some schools and not in others.....

Mr. Aiello

We can't scapegoat teachers as being ineffective. You hit on something Father Jadoff——motivation and what the student needs as an end result of his or her education. In our auxiliary education project we have some of the students with the worst records in New York doing wonderful work because, now, they are genuinely motivated.

Mr. Hale

Is that part of the answer? Focus on motivating children in the second and third grade? What can we do about the 2 or 3 disruptive youngsters in those grades today who are making it impossible for the children to learn?

Mr. Aiello

Obviously, we have to do something about the disruptive child....You can't allow a few students to destroy life for the rest....I think that somehow, to succeed, you have to have a collective effort involving the parent, the community, and the child.

Mr. Seely

I think that the schools have got to now turn to the community and say, look, we need your help.

Father Jadoff

On that note, I think we have to close. This program has been held under the auspices of the Catholic Interracial Council and we wish to thank its President Mario Cuomo and Executive Director John Garra.

(Additional copies of this edited transcript may be be acquired through the Catholic Interracial Council, 225 East 52nd Street, New York, N.Y. (212) 751-9445)